

The Way Up Is Down

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Slide Notes

The Way Up Is Down

What a strange thought! Imagine an elevator with an “Up” button that shows an arrow pointing down.

A New Commandment

- So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” — Jn 13:34-35 (NLT)

When the world looks at us, do they see us loving one another? Does the world see me loving like Jesus loved?

A Difficult Proposition

- Loving others does not come naturally
- It is especially difficult to set aside our self interests for the benefit of others
- This commandment is extremely difficult for us!

Our natural man without Jesus is intensely self focused.

When there are only two desserts left at a church dinner and two people still in line behind you, what do you typically do?

- A. Play like you didn't notice the shortage, take a dessert and sit down.
- B. Assume that one of the people behind you doesn't like dessert or is on a diet—or should be on a diet. (You are actually helping them by taking a dessert.)
- C. Skip dessert so someone else can have it.
- D. Cut one dessert in half so everyone can have a piece, then take the uncut dessert.
- E. I think I will have two desserts. (Oblivious to the situation.)

Requires Transformation

- Must die to
 - Self

- Sin
- Society
- Must live for
 - God
 - Others
- We naturally tend to do the opposite

We need a whole new way of thinking and living. Die to? Like a corpse responds to a temptation. Picture someone offering marijuana or meth to a corpse.

Transformation Requires

- Long-term commitment
 - Life-long process
- A solid partnership with God
 - Can't do it on your own
 - God won't without your cooperation
- Willing to go through pain & hardship
 - No shortcuts
- Willing to live a countercultural life
 - Culture distracts and opposes

Pain and hardships starve to death our pride and self will. Sometimes it's as simple as letting someone else have the dessert. Other times, it's a real killer! Why should we even bother?

Hope of Joy Motivates

- ... let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame... — Heb 12:1-2

“author and finisher” — Jesus is our inspiration and model. Must learn to live for something bigger than yourself! Do that by keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus.

Love Motivates

- This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. — Jn 15:12-13

- And it's a command!

Love motivated Jesus. Must choose to let love motivate us. Actually, it's not optional!

Think Like Jesus

- Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. ...he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, — Php 2:4-9

Live for Jesus, Not Self

- Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. — 2 Co 5:14-15

“Upside Down” Kingdom

- So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. — Mt 18:4
- Then he said to them, “You like to appear righteous in public, but God knows your hearts. What this world honors is detestable in the sight of God. — Lk 16:15
- ... “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” — Mt 20:25-28

“But I thought it was the great evangelists or the big healing ministries that were greatest!” How is a child humble? Not presumptuous. They accept and enjoy their role. *Detestable* is a strong word

in the Greek! Some versions translate it as *abomination*. Actually, it is the world around us that is upside down. Is it different among us when we “rule” over people?

Dying to Truly Live

- Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? — Mt 16:24-26

Die to self. What was Jesus’ cross? God’s will over His own! (Mt 26:42)

Love Jesus Most!

- “If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it. — Mt 10:37-39

Love Jesus more than your spouse, also! Judy was a little taken aback the first time I told her that I love Jesus more than her. But she definitely prefers that arrangement. I can love her best only when I love Jesus first!

Heavenly Perspective

- Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven... Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God... So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don’t be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world... — Col 3:1-6

When we love the world with its pleasures and benefits more than we love Jesus, we are idol worshipers.

Pass the Love Along

- We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.
— 1 Jn 3:16

Jesus defines and models God's agape love. We are called to love others in the same way.

Don't Cause Stumbling

- ... Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall... if another believer is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it. Don't let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died... So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up. Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble. — Ro 14:13-21

Decide! A choice you make ahead! Paul was addressing the issue of which foods were okay for Christians to eat. He pointed out that the food was not the main point, but the effect your eating has on others. Then he expanded it to "anything else." Even if it *might* cause problems. If you love others with God's love, you will consider the effects on others before exercising the liberty you have in Christ.

Don't Just Please Yourself

- We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. For even Christ didn't live to please himself... — Ro 15:1-3

The stronger and more mature you are in Jesus, the more you die to yourself to meet the needs of others. The more you insist on doing things your way, the less mature and weaker you are.

Husbands, as the head and strength of your home, it is your responsibility to do the most yielding of rights! Jacob adjusted his travel to the young children and flocks.

But Jacob replied, "You can see, my lord, that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If they are driven too hard, even for one day, all the animals could die. Please, my lord, go ahead of your servant. We will follow slowly, at a pace that is comfortable for the livestock and the children..." — Ge 33:13-14

The Crucified Life

- Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. — Ga 5:24

This is radical thinking! But it is something we are expected to do. Picture Jesus suffering on the cross as you decide whether or not to follow the passions and desires of your sinful nature. He suffered tremendously in a violent death to set you free from lustful passions and sin.

Garbage or True Riches?

- Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him... I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! ... But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. — Php 3:8-14

Is Paul on to something here? Don't we instead look to the Lord to deliver us *from* suffering and hardships? Paul wants to follow the path that Jesus took—dying to self and living for God.

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- So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. — 1 Pe 5:6-7
- “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ... For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. — Mt 6:31-33

If I die to self and work to meet the needs of others, who is going to take care of my needs? Work to advance God's Kingdom and He will provide what you need. It's accomplished one small step at a time. As you more consistently make godly choices in little things you will also find the strength and direction to be faithful in the big things. Luke 16:10

Dying to Self...

- When you're forgotten, neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy being counted worthy to suffer for Jesus Christ, this is dying to self. When your good is spoken of as evil, when your wishes are crossed, and your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let your anger rise up in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take it in patient loving silence, this is dying to self. When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder in your life, any irregularity, any unpunctuality, any annoyance; when you stand face to face with adversity, waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility and endure as Jesus Christ endured the cross, this is dying to self. When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any society, or any interruption in your life, this is dying to self. When you never care to refer to yourself in any conversation or record your own good deeds or yearn after any commendation or desire to truly be unknown, this is dying to self. When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met while you feel your needs are being unmet, and you can be happy with him in your spirit, this is dying to self. And when you can receive correction and reproof from one of seemingly less stature than yourself, and you can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, this is dying to self. —Author unknown

A good way to evaluate to what degree you are dying to self. Not meant to discourage you. We all have quite a ways to go. I want to challenge you to truly let Jesus be Lord of your life.

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There's so much more to Christianity than simply avoiding hell and going to heaven. Don't miss it!